

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this 2003-2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is to outline Montana's five-year plan for outdoor recreation management, conservation and development. It provides the strategic framework for recreation facility managers to use as a guideline in planning and prioritizing resources for staff and funding, and includes a timeline for implementation.

Since 1965, the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program has provided more than \$32 million to Montana for state and local outdoor recreation projects, which are administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), plus an additional \$3.5 billion for projects on federal lands. LWCF is a critical contributor to Montana's quality of life and to its tourism economy (nonresident visitors spent \$1.7 billion in Montana in 2001, making tourism Montana's second largest industry behind agriculture). This Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan describes Montana's supply of public outdoor recreation facilities, trends in demand for those facilities, key outdoor recreation challenges and issues in Montana, and statewide goals, objectives, actions and priorities for enhancing outdoor recreation in the years 2003 to 2007.

SCORP Methodology

In order to determine outdoor recreation supply and demand in Montana, the planning team used a variety of methods and data sets. A statewide online survey of recreation facility managers was conducted in October 2002 to obtain an inventory and assessment of public recreation facilities. To determine demand (level of resident and nonresident need or desire for outdoor recreation facilities, services and programs), the planning team used several recent consumer studies and data trends. The key studies were the Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services; the Montana Resident 1998-1999 Pleasure Travel Survey; the 1999 Report of Recreation Participation Patterns by Montana Residents; and the 2000-2001 Nonresident Visitor Study, all of which were conducted by the University of Montana Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research. Additionally, the planning team reviewed resident/nonresident recreation licensing data trends from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and Motor Vehicle Division, and national recreation research from the Travel Industry Association of America, American Recreation Coalition, America Outdoors and the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment. The introductory sections of Chapters 2 and 3 provide further details. Public outreach efforts included a SCORP Advisory Committee, statewide public meetings, a public comment period and targeted contacts made by the planning team to stakeholder groups.

Outdoor Recreation Facility Supply

Recreation Facility Inventory

Montana's land base is 39% state, tribal and federal land (57,346 square miles), and 61% private and municipal (city or county) land. The recreation facility managers who participated in the online survey indicated that they manage nearly 28 million acres of public parks and open space for outdoor recreation. Participant organizations

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- ♦ Recreation Demand
- ♦ Issues & Gaps
- ♦ Goals & Strategic Actions



Online Facility Inventory Survey Participant Groups Contacted

- ♦ Montana Cities (Montana League of Cities and Towns)
- ♦ Montana Counties (Montana Association of Counties)
- ♦ School Districts (Montana School District Superintendents)
- ♦ Montana Park & Recreation Association (MRPA)
- ♦ Montana Tribes & Tribal Colleges
- ♦ Montana Colleges & Universities
- ♦ Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- ♦ Montana Dept. of Natural Resources Conservation (DNRC)
- ♦ USDA Forest Service
- ♦ Bureau of Land Management
- ♦ US Fish & Wildlife Service
- ♦ National Park Service
- ♦ US Army Corps of Engineers
- ♦ US Bureau of Reclamation



Statewide Trail Miles by Type*

Trail Type	Miles
Walking/Hiking Only	3,645
Bike/Pedestrian	716
Horse/Hiking	16,939
XC Skiing (groomed)	565
OHV (federal only)	4,105
Snowmobile (groomed)	5,594

* Agency estimates of designated system route trails only. Does not include roads or user-created trails.

Source: SCORP Statewide Recreation Facility Manager Survey, October 2002 (see Chapter 2).



also manage nearly 464,000 acres of lakes, 42 state parks, 650+ fishing access sites, 22,000 miles of designated non-motorized trails, and about 9,700 miles of designated motorized trails. Although these figures do not represent all of the public parks and lands in Montana, they do demonstrate the extensive amount of land that is available for outdoor recreation. Additionally, survey participants manage public swimming pools, play fields and courts (baseball, soccer, football, track, tennis, basketball), fairgrounds, golf courses, playgrounds, municipal parks and campgrounds.

Recreation Facility Condition

Many of Montana's most popular public recreation facilities are aging and deteriorating, while others are in good condition. According to the facility managers, public facilities in the poorest overall condition are fairgrounds, tennis courts, off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails, horse and hiking trails, and swimming pools. One-third of public swimming pools are in poor or very poor condition, as well as nearly half of tennis courts. Facilities in the best condition are paved bike/pedestrian trails, climbing walls and golf courses. Only 5% of river boat ramps are listed as being in poor condition, and 90% of paved trails are in good or excellent condition. Two-thirds of existing playgrounds are listed in good or excellent condition.

Montana resident surveys reveal that facilities in highest demand are swimming pools, biking and walking trails, fishing facilities, skate parks, ball fields, basketball courts, and camper and RV spaces without hookups. According to managers, significant percentages of these facilities are in poor condition. It is important that partnerships be formed to identify creative solutions for public facility maintenance and improvements.

Recreation Facility Needs

In the online survey, facility managers indicated that \$95.2 million is needed to fulfill outdoor recreation facility needs. Clearly, existing facilities are in need of attention: there were three times more survey responses for facilities needing upgrades or repairs than for new land acquisition, and 25% more responses for upgrades or repairs than for new construction. At the local level, facility needs mentioned most frequently were swimming pools, ball fields, playgrounds, fairgrounds, bike/pedestrian trails and skate parks. Key state and federal needs included upgrades to fishing access sites, motorized and non-motorized trails, parks, boating facilities, campgrounds and interpretive facilities. A significant number of survey participants also expressed needs related to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance at existing facilities. However, the funds required to fulfill all of the facility needs far exceed the available local, state or federal resources.

In the BRFSS survey of Montana residents, the activity most in need of additional sites or facilities at the county level was swimming, followed by biking, fishing, walking, skateboarding, field sports, basketball and camping. There are striking similarities in the needs reported by BRFSS respondents (citizens), and those reported by recreation facility managers in the online survey. In both surveys, community-based recreation facilities for swimming, biking, walking, skateboarding and field games were ranked highly. Rural recreation facilities were needed for fishing, hiking, biking, boating and camping.

To adequately maintain and enhance Montana's supply of outdoor recreation facilities, managers face a number of challenges, including an increasing demand for recreational facilities and services, and a human population aging faster than the national average. Moreover, managers are experiencing rising costs for management and maintenance of their facilities, declining state and federal recreation budgets, and the need for additional or alternative sources of funding.

Outdoor Recreation Demand

Montana Demographic Trends

According to the 2000 U.S. census, Montana is home to 902,195 citizens, which is an increase of 103,130 (13%) since 1990. Most of the growth took place in western and south central Montana counties, while most of eastern Montana's counties lost population over the decade. The changes have caused increased demand for recreation facilities in high growth areas, and decreased ability to pay for existing facilities in areas that have lost residents (taxpayers). Nearly one-in-five Montanans will be age 65+ in all but seven counties by 2025. As the population ages, there is likely to be less demand for strenuous outdoor recreation activities, and more demand for activities like walking, golf, fishing and motorized recreation.

Fifty years ago, Montana had one of the highest per capita income rates in the nation, and now it has one of the lowest at \$17,151, which is 58% below the national average. However, according to University of Montana research, Montanans take more leisure trips than the U.S. average. Some residents appear to be willing to accept lower wages as a trade-off for quality of life: in Montana, they have more opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The implications of the demographic data about Montanans are that outdoor recreation managers need to focus not only on facilities and programs for youth (29% of the population) and young adults (34% of the population), but increasingly for mature adults (38% of the population and growing). Because of Montana's struggling economy and low income population, affordability of outdoor recreation is a key issue, as is the limited ability of businesses and citizens to pay higher taxes for it. This is one area where tourism benefits Montana: nonresidents help pay for outdoor recreation facilities and programs. Montana's recreation facility managers need to provide more opportunities for visitors to spend money to support enhanced facilities and services.

Montanans' Recreation Habits and Concerns

Resident research conducted by the University of Montana Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR) found that Montana households with higher incomes and Montana households with children are more likely to be active in recreation activities. Overall, the study showed that the most popular outdoor recreation activities are walking, wildlife watching, attending sporting events, hiking, biking, attending festivals, swimming, picnicking, nature photography, fishing, motorcycling, hunting, camping, golfing, horseback riding and boating (see sidebar). The results of the ITRR study are similar to the BRFSS survey in that walking, wildlife viewing, hiking, biking, swimming and fishing are popular outdoor recreation activities among Montanans. These findings also are consistent with the survey of facility managers, who expressed needs for trails, parks and open space, swimming pools and fishing/boating facilities to fulfill recreation needs.

Overall Recreation Activity Participation of Montana Households 1998-99

Activity	%
Walking	75%
Recreational Shopping	53%
Wildlife Watching	52%
Attending Sporting Events	47%
Day Hiking	37%
Biking	35%
Attending Festivals	34%
Swimming	32%
Picnicking	31%
Attending Performances	29%
Participate in Sporting Events	29%
Nature Photography	29%
Visiting Museums	29%
Visiting Interpretive Centers	28%
Fishing (other than fly)	27%
Gambling	24%
Visiting Art Galleries	24%
Motorcycling	22%
Visiting Native American Sites	19%
Hunting	18%
Camping - Tent	18%
Golfing	16%
Horseback Riding	15%
Visiting Attractions	14%
Fly Fishing	13%
Boating - Motorized	13%
Camping - Vehicle	13%
Backpacking	12%
Boating - Nonmotorized	11%
Sledding	11%
ATV/Off-road Recreation	10%
Downhill Skiing	10%
Snowmobiling	7%
Water Skiing	6%
Cross Country Skiing	5%
Ice Fishing	5%
Snowboarding	4%
Snowshoeing	2%

Source: ITRR Report 68



MT Nonresident Traveler Activities

Activity	# Visitors	%
Shopping	3,606,030	18.6
Wildlife watching	2,697,678	13.9
Day Hiking	2,401,564	12.4
Picnicking	1,954,901	10.1
Camping (devlp)	1,632,460	8.4
Fishing	1,208,550	6.2
Nature Study	847,366	4.4
Gambling	785,264	4.1
Camping (undevlp)	704,911	3.6
Golfing	478,241	2.5
Rafting/Floating	425,728	2.2
Sporting Event	345,092	1.8
Backpacking	296,796	1.5
Off highway/ATV	256,730	1.3
Motor Boating	246,909	1.3
Downhill Skiing	242,262	1.3
Hunting	217,458	1.1
Mtn Biking	215,629	1.1
Road/Tour Biking	213,056	1.1
Canoe/Kayaking	181,445	0.9
Snowmobiling	115,425	0.6
XC Skiing	69,125	0.4
Water-skiing	68,090	0.4
Snowboarding	57,712	0.3
Snowshoeing	57,712	0.3
Ice Fishing	19,237	0.1
	19,345,372	100.0

Source: ITRR 2000-2001 Traveler Study

The BRFSS survey asked Montanans about their *primary* outdoor recreational activity during the past twelve months. Walking was the most frequently cited activity, which is consistent with national trends, followed by fishing, hunting, golf, camping and horseback riding. These data also support findings about facility needs, indicating that facilities such as parks and open space, playgrounds, trails (walking, cross-country skiing, biking, 4-wheeling), skate parks, swimming pools and ball fields are important facilities to serve Montanans. The survey also asked about activities that Montanans would like to have done, but were unable. The most frequently cited activity was downhill skiing/snowboarding, followed by fishing, float boating, cross-country skiing, hunting, camping and golf. The top three reasons for their inability to recreate were lack of time, physical disability and cost. About 8% of Montanans cited problems related to access because of a disability. When asked about recreation issues or concerns, it did not appear that overcrowding, use by outfitters and their guests, or nonresident visitor use are major issues to most Montanans, but the need for facilities, and inadequate access to recreation, did appear to concern 7-10% of residents in several regions of the state.

Quality wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing experiences, and the opportunity to access Montana's vast natural areas, are important to Montanans. Increasingly, concerns related to hunting, fishing, and motorized versus nonmotorized access create conflicts among public and private land owners and managers, recreationists and water users. As Montana's population and the number of nonresident visitors have grown, there is greater demand on facilities and managers. Tourism is an important component of Montana's economy, and it creates a significant demand for outdoor recreation facilities. Moreover, the highest demand activities parallel the facility types with greatest needs.

Nonresident Tourism Trends

In 2001, Montana hosted 9.6 million nonresident visitors – a 46% increase from 6.5 million visitors in 1990 – and they spent \$1.7 billion in the state. Montana's nonresident visitors enjoy the same outdoor recreation activities as Montana residents, both seasonally and year-round (see sidebar, next page).

The top ten states of origin and the number of travel *groups* from each in 2001 were:

Washington	466,000	Alberta, CAN	206,000
North Dakota	354,000	Minnesota	204,000
California	306,000	Colorado	163,000
Wyoming	297,000	Oregon	155,000
Idaho	261,000	Utah	124,000

Montana's Tourism Strategic Plan for 2003-2007 identifies high-value, low-impact nonresident visitors as primary target customer segments. These visitors are willing to pay for high quality recreation experiences. However, nonresidents' contribution to funding Montana recreation services and facilities is not being maximized because taxes and fees charged to nonresidents are lower than in many other states.

Many nonresident visitors come to Montana to enjoy natural resource-based outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing and motorized recreation (boating, snowmobiling, 4-wheeling). While many of these outdoorsmen are high-value visitors, they also contribute to conflict related to these activities in certain parts of the state.

Summary of Supply and Demand

Montana resident and nonresident recreationists participate in generally the same outdoor activities, which are walking, hiking, biking, swimming, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting and picnicking. Montana citizens are aging, and wages are low, so accessibility and affordability are important facets of outdoor recreation planning. State and regional tourism efforts are directed at attracting higher value, lower impact nonresident visitors to maximize tourism revenues while minimizing the impact of tourism on Montanans. Demand for both motorized and non-motorized recreation access will continue to increase; therefore, facilities will need to be provided to address this demand effectively, while managing Montana's natural and cultural assets sustainably.

National and state data indicate that these trends will continue, with particular emphasis on activities preferred by mature citizens and youth, as families and extended families seek to reconnect and establish stronger family ties through recreation activities.

Recreation Issues and Gaps

During the SCORP planning process, ten key issues were identified through analyses of the BRFSS survey of Montanans, online survey of facility managers and other research and public outreach efforts described in Chapters 2 and 3. The ten issues are grouped into four categories:

- ◆ Gaps Between Supply & Demand
- ◆ ADA Compliance
- ◆ Adequate Funding & Other Resources to Manage & Maintain Recreation Facilities
- ◆ Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Programs & Grants

The issues that relate to gaps between supply and demand are the following:

- ISSUE 1: Inadequate swimming pool facilities to serve local needs.
- ISSUE 2: Insufficient quality and quantity of recreation facilities for youth.
- ISSUE 3: Need for continued access to, and maintenance of, rural and backcountry trails and use areas for hiking, biking, skiing, equine, and motorized (OHV, snowmobile) recreation.
- ISSUE 4: Need for increased miles and maintenance of urban and rural trails.
- ISSUE 5: Insufficient access for water-based recreation.

The issue related to ADA compliance is the following:

- ISSUE 7: Need for upgrades to provide more ADA-compliant outdoor recreation facilities.

Montana's population grew by 13% from 1990 to 2000, and is expected to top one million by 2010. It is the 4th oldest population in the nation.





The issues related to resources for managing and maintaining facilities are the following:

ISSUE 8: Lack of awareness of the SCORP, LWCF program, and other resources available to local entities for outdoor recreation facilities.

ISSUE 9: Insufficient funding, staffing and partnerships at every level (local, tribal, state, federal) to manage and maintain outdoor recreation facilities.

The issue related to the Land & Water Conservation Fund program is the following:

ISSUE 10: Need for additional funding for LWCF grant program, and simplification of the process.

The issues provide the basis for identifying goals, objectives and actions for the SCORP.

SCORP Goals, Objectives and Actions

Based on the analyses of the supply of outdoor recreation facilities, of demand for outdoor recreation, and on identification of key issues and gaps, the planning team established ten goals for Montana's outdoor recreation managers in 2003 to 2007:

1. Increase the quality and/or quantity of local swimming facilities.
2. Enhance local recreation facilities for youth.
3. Continue access to, and maintenance of, rural and backcountry trails and use areas for hiking, biking, skiing, equine and motorized (OHV, snowmobile) recreation.
4. Increase miles and maintenance of urban and rural trails.
5. Enhance access for water-based recreation activities (fishing, boating).
6. Improve access for wildlife-based recreation activities (hunting, wildlife viewing).
7. Implement ADA improvements to recreation facilities and sites where needed.
8. Build awareness of, and participation in, the SCORP process and LWCF program among local and state recreation facility managers and local communities.
9. Create sufficient funding and stable resources to manage and maintain outdoor recreation facilities.
10. Refine and streamline the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) local program and grant process in Montana to be as user friendly as possible.

There are 36 specific objectives and 110 actions identified in order to achieve the goals. They are listed in Chapter 5, and summarized in the Implementation Action Table in Chapter 5, section 5.4 (page 67).

The priorities for the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program are established by the strategy outlined in this SCORP document. If Montana's outdoor recreation facility managers use this SCORP as a guide for their recreation planning and programming over the next five years, they will help achieve the goals and objectives, and better meet the needs of their customers – Montana's citizens and visitors.